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SUBJECT: STATE MINISTER TEKEDA DISCUSSES REGIONAL AND
DOMESTIC ISSUES WITH PDAS THOMAS-GREENFIELD

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11. (SBU) SUMMARY: In a January 17 meeting with State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tekeda Alemu, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Linda Thomas-Greenfield asked about Ethiopia's

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outlook for the new Somali government, the Ethiopian relationship with Sudan, as well as noted the importance of a fair and free election when Ethiopians visit the polls in April. Tekeda told PDAS and Ambassador that Somali Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein and the new cabinet are "just what the doctor ordered" for Somalia at this time, noting that Ethiopia's relationship with the new government is very productive. However, he said that the security situation continues to be unpredictable and did not express confidence in immediate deployment of the necessary numbers of AMISOM troops required for Ethiopia to withdraw. Tekeda also noted that Ethiopia's relationship with the government of Sudan is constructive, and that "Ethiopia is committed to justice for those in the South and the West (of the country)." On local elections, Tekeda contrasted Ethiopia's situation with that of Kenya's recent elections issues, noting that Ethiopia is dominated by one strong party and that such unrest surrounding the local elections in April is unlikely.

IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORS IN DIFFICULT TIMES

12. (SBU) Africa Bureau PDAS Linda Thomas-Greenfield, accompanied by Ambassador and Poloff (notetaker), met with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tekeda Alemu on January 17 to discuss a range of regional and domestic issues. Top of the agenda was Ethiopia's current relations with the new government of Somalia and ongoing challenges with Ethiopia's military mission in Somalia. Tekeda said that Ethiopia is currently enjoying an unprecedentedly close and productive relationship with the new Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein and components of his cabinet (specifically the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Information). He noted that the Prime Minister has begun reaching out to parts of the opposition and that the political scene is calming down. The security situation, on the other hand, continues to be "difficult to predict," Tekeda lamented. Though somewhat better of late, he pointed out that the next contingent of Burundian troops to support AMISOM must arrive soon. He was less confident in support from other countries, though,

pointing out that other countries do not view the situation in Somalia as a matter of national security, as the Ethiopians do, and thus are less pressed to act. Tekeda complained about outsiders seeking solutions in Somalia, noting UNSRSG Ahmedou Ould Abadallah's recent trip to Asmara, saying that the only solution was support for the TFG and development of TFG security forces adequate to sustain peace in Somalia.

13. (SBU) On relations with Sudan, State Minister Tekeda told PDAS Thomas-Greenfield that Ethiopia has traditionally handled its relationship with the government of Sudan very carefully. Though still scarred by the 1995 attempted assassination of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, Tekeda described current relations as stable and positive and noted that there is a good level of trust with a portion of the government.⁸ He pointed out, however, that "Ethiopia has made it clear that it is committed to justice for those in the south and the west (of the country)."

EPRDF LEARNED FROM PAST LESSONS, OPPOSITION HAD CHANCE

14. (SBU) In response to Tekeda's comment that the recent elections in Kenya and the subsequent unrest will be difficult to resolve, PDAS Thomas-Greenfield inquired about Tekeda's prognosis for the upcoming Ethiopian local elections scheduled for April. Tekeda answered that, had the Kenyan elections been held in an environment similar to years ago when there was one dominant party, that there would be no "vehicle for mobilization" of disgruntled Kenyan voters. He then compared this with the current Ethiopian political environment, where he pointed out, there is a very strong ruling party. PDAS Thomas-Greenfield stressed that having a weak opposition is contrary to the interest of the development of Ethiopian democracy. Tekeda replied that the opposition had had their chance to grow and enhance their

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political base in the 2005 elections, following "mistakes committed by the ruling party." "However," Tekeda continued, "the ruling party won't let that situation happen again, in which they become complacent and arrogant." PDAS Thomas-Greenfield outlined that a winner-take-all approach to elections and democracy is detrimental and that the losers need to be incorporated in the decision making process of the government. Tekeda pointed out that the 2005 elections gave the opposition significant gains, but that Ethiopia needs responsible opposition, "not like Hailu Shawel" (Chairman of the CUD coalition during the 2005 elections). "We almost lost (control) after the 2005 elections," he said, "it was very close." "The position taken by Washington at the time was very helpful and helped us manage the situation. If the US had followed the EU, it would have been very dangerous." Tekeda concluded. (NOTE: The EU had declared the opposition the winner in 2005 after a small sampling in urban areas. With 70 percent of the population living in rural areas, President Carter and the Carter Center declared the election reflective of a win by the ruling party, which is now accepted. END NOTE)

15. (U) Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Thomas-Greenfield was unable to clear on this message before departing Addis Ababa.
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